Special status to Rajasthan

†2509. DR. PRABHA THAKUR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether in view of peculiarities such as two-third desert area, drought and long inter national border with Pakistan etc. characterizing Rajasthan, Government propose to confer special status on the State like the one given to North-East States, J and K, Assam, Manipur and Himachal Pradesh; and

(b) if so, steps taken by Government in this regard; and

(c) if not, reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) Special Category States status has been accorded to some States on the basis of a set criteria that includes—having a strategic location on the border with neighbouring countries, hilly terrain, inadequate economic and social infrastructure, predominantly large tribal population and limited and weak resource base compared to development needs. Most States that have been granted Special Category status during the last two decades have been created out of small Union Territories or from districts of some other States necessitating creation of overheads and administrative infrastructure out of proportion to their resource base.

(b) and (c) There is no proposal at present before the Government for including Rajasthan in the list of Special Category States.

New survey on BPL status

2510. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the BPL Survey Report done in 2002 was shelved on a Supreme Court stay order and if so, whether a new survey on BPL status in the country is proposed to be done in 2007;

(b) whether the earlier surveys on poverty estimation done by Planning Commission and the Ministry of Rural Development independently of each other, were irreconcilable on a number of parameters; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) whether a uniform schedule was used for all the States surveyed and there was no uniformity in the cut-off scores allotted to each State across India, leaving the same to be fixed at the discretion of the State concerned?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) The Ministry of Rural Development in association with the State Governments conducts the BPL (Below Poverty Line) Census in the rural areas to identify the BPL families for providing assistance under various programmes of the Ministry. The guidelines to conduct BPL census 2002 for the 10th Five Year Plan were issued to all States in September, 2002 but its results could not be finalized as the Honorable Supreme Court had passed a stay order on 5-5-2003 while hearing Writ Petition No. 196/2001 in the matter of PUCL V/s Union of India which has now been vacated on 14-2-2006. The process of finalizing the new list on the basis of BPL Census 2002 is in an advanced stage. No decision has been taken to conduct a fresh survey in 2007.

(b) Estimation of poverty in the country is done by the Planning Commission on the basis of large sample survey of consumer expenditure carried out by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) after an interval of approximately five years using the methodology contained in the Report of the Expert Group on Estimation of Proportion and Number of Poor (Lakdwala Committee). The Ministry of Rural Development conducts the BPL Census in the rural areas to identify the BPL families for providing assistance under various programmes of the Ministry. The estimation of poverty by the Planning Commission on the basis of sample survey data and identification of BPL rural households through BPL Census by the Ministry of Rural Development are two separate exercises arrived out for different purposes. Since these are based on different methodologies, they are no comparable.

(c) For BPL Census 2002, a uniform methodology of score based ranking of rural households based on 13 socio-economic parameters was prescribed. The States were advised to identify the BPL rural households in accordance with the number of poor determined by the Planning Commission with the flexibility to decide the cut off point by taking into account the cost of living in a particular area and other local factors.